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WATERCARE GUIDE

POOLSPAFORUM SPECIAL EDITION



PoolSpaForum.com
PoolSpaForum Special Edition

**MICHAEL PHELPS
SIGNATURE SWIM SPAS**

by **MASTER SPAS**

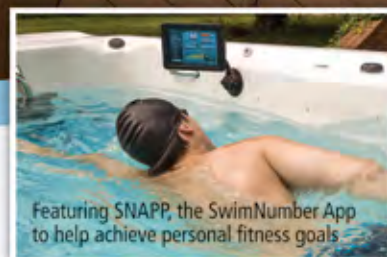
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POOLSEARCH Accuracy

POOLSEARCH has consolidated our buyer's guide to summarise the major players in the industry. Due to obvious logistics, we do not conduct individual independent product evaluations of each exercise pool or hot tub featured in our magazine; instead we rely on information provided by our editors, auditors, homeowners and other third parties to evaluate products before printing our magazine. Because of the inherent delay and risk of inadvertently omitting or misprinting information in our publication, we recommend each homeowner conduct a thorough evaluation of their manufacturer or retailer before purchasing.



A Swimming Pool Survival Guide Just for the PoolSpaForum.com Family

I would like to welcome you to a special edition of POOLSEARCH, designed exclusively for the PoolSpaForum.com audience. This swimming pool survival guide provides local and company-specific information and commentary that you won't find anywhere else.

In this guide, you will find out how to pick the best type of pool to suit the needs and wants of your family (page 9), all the basics of in-ground pool construction (page 21), how learning to swim and keeping a regimen can dramatically change your health and well being (page 28) and much, much more. PoolSpaForum.com seeks nothing but the best for its members, and this special guide goes a long way to prove it.

As always, I welcome your feedback and comments.

Warm regards,

David T. Wood
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SPA GUTS

Take a look at what goes on under the hood of your hot tub.

FILTRATION SYSTEM

The pump pushes water through the plumbing, jets and filtration system. The water passes through the filter, which cleans out contaminants. Depending on what water-sanitation system you chose, the water may also pass through an ozonator or UV-C chamber.

CONTROL PANEL

The control panel operates all the functions of your spa. Besides turning things on and off, you can program your spa to run at peak efficiency and monitor your sanitation system. Many control panels are now Wi-Fi or Bluetooth-enabled so you can operate your hot tub from a mobile device within range.

BUILT-IN SANITATION SYSTEM

Today's advanced water-maintenance systems include ozone, salt or UV-C technologies. While each system has advantages and unique features, they all reduce the need to refill the spa and heat new water.

PUMP

Pumps are plumbed and wired into place in the lower area of the frame. Oversize, multiple jet pumps with high horsepower add to energy costs and are unnecessary for optimum performance. Consider a spa with a single-speed jet pump that uses only the energy needed to deliver a powerful hydromassage experience or an energy-conscious spa that uses multiple pump motors, allowing for reduced amperage and increased efficiency. Horse-power ratings are a good barometer for the strength of your pumps, but be sure to check the strength and flow the old-fashioned way, too: Just stick your hand in the water and check the strength of the jets.

ELECTRONICS/SPA PACK

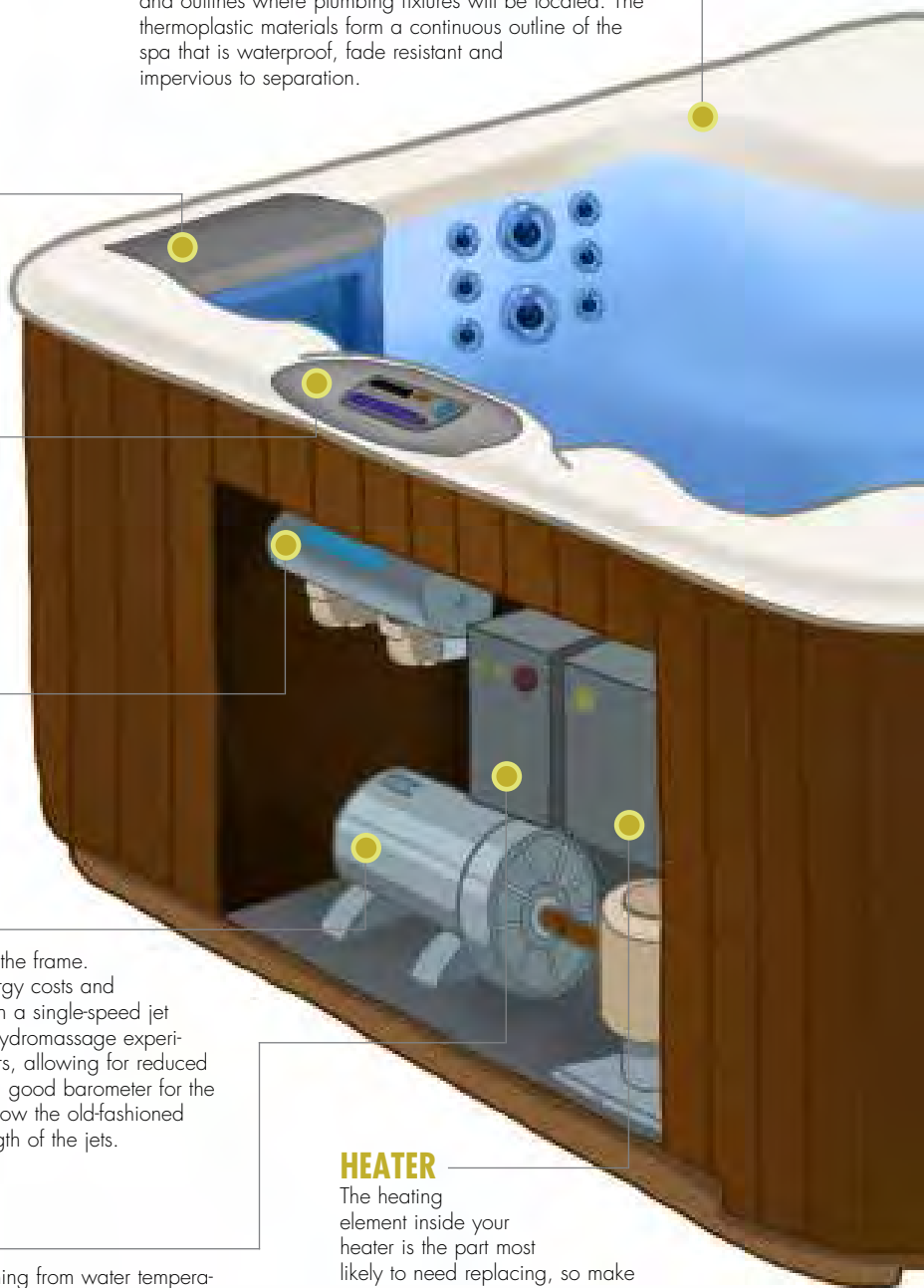
Solid-state electronics are used in most spas, controlling everything from water temperature and filtration times to aromatherapy and massage cycles. Many are equipped with filtration and smart features to make the spa nearly maintenance-free. They can also be set to take advantage of off-peak energy rates, ensuring your spa will operate in the most economical way. Some are even equipped with time-out features that will automatically turn off a pump or light should you accidentally leave it on after using the spa.

ACRYLIC SHELL

Flat, thermoplastic acrylic sheets are drawn into molds by vacuum to form the contours of spa seats, lounges, pillows and filter well. Time and temperature are tightly controlled during this critical process, which also shapes the top edge and outlines where plumbing fixtures will be located. The thermoplastic materials form a continuous outline of the spa that is waterproof, fade resistant and impervious to separation.

HEATER

The heating element inside your heater is the part most likely to need replacing, so make sure the heater is located in an easily accessible place. The element should either be coated or made of a material that will combat corrosion. Heaters used to have mechanical switches, which can be unreliable. Now you want your heater to have electronic sensors that will shut the heater down if a problem is detected.



JETS

Jets work by combining warm water and air to produce a powerful burst of water, creating a massaging action. Jets are usually under water, but they can be installed above the water line, too. Jets are placed strategically throughout your spa to give different areas of your body the attention they need. Jets differ in design, variety, location, power and adjustability. For the optimum hydromassage experience, look for a spa that offers completely adjustable jets to create just the right sensation, from powerful to gentle. Customize your hydromassage experience by looking for options that enable you to select the intensity by adjusting the mixture and diverting water to different jet combinations. Look for variety in the design of the jets. Consider a spa that offers proprietary jets tailored for the spa's pumps, plumbing, design and flow rates.

COATING

Since the acrylic has little structural rigidity, a coating is applied to give the shell enough strength to contain hundreds of pounds of water and bathers. Some manufacturers spray or roll on fiberglass fibers and resin; others back the acrylic with ABS plastic. In either case, the shell achieves rigidity and strength, making it extremely strong.

INSULATION

Insulation retains water temperature and reduces noise from pumps and blowers. Some manufacturers use a full-foam technique, while others use blankets of insulation around the spa shell. Full-foam insulation consists of completely filling the area between the shell and cabinet with a thick layer of solid, rigid foam. Verify that your spa is constructed with multiple layers of high-density, closed-cell polyurethane foam (typically the same material used to insulate commercial freezers), which results in low operating costs. Closed-cell foam generally provides greater efficiency because it cannot absorb water. When considering spas with layered insulation, look for materials that have high insulating (R) values. A spa designed with removable walls will allow you to easily move the layers of insulation aside if the spa requires any type of service.

FRAME

Frames are constructed of premium-grade lumber or metal to support substantial weight. Their design uses support similar to roof trusses, and the lower members are elevated to allow air passage and avoid rot. The frames create a cavity where plumbing, pumps, insulation, heaters and electronic controllers are located.

PLUMBING

Spas have a lot of plumbing. Each jet has to be individually plumbed, sometimes in a loop configuration to ensure even pressures. Air lines must be plumbed in addition to the water lines. Flexible PVC pipe is widely used due to its inert properties with spa water. To make the process more automated, less expensive and less likely to leak, many manufacturers are using preassembled plumbing harnesses. They are simpler to install and fit well within the confines of the cabinet.

EXTERIOR CABINET

Most spa cabinets are constructed from polymers, which combine the appearance of wood with strength, rigidity and ease of maintenance. These will not crack, delaminate or be subject to other problems a natural material like wood might incur during the life of the spa. Companies offer polymer cabinets that are molded to look like rock or other finishes you might see in a backyard setting.

Illustration:
Michael Berrelleza

ACCESSORIZE

Don't leave the hot tub dealership without having all the fun things you'll want to enjoy with your hot tub.

COVER

A high-density cover retains the spa's heat and moisture; therefore, it is imperative to look for a quality cover. Since almost all hot tub covers fold, look for a cover that uses a heat-seal gasket that will protect against vapor and heat loss in the cover's crease. In addition, look for a cover that has a generous skirting that sufficiently covers the spa's shell. Get a cover with locking, tie-down straps. This will not only ensure that your cover won't be blown off in high winds, but it will also keep unwelcome guests from accessing your hot tub.

COVER LIFTERS

By investing in a cover lifter, you take the work out of removing the cover from your hot tub, and you will also have a place to keep your cover while you relax. There are many types of lifters on the market today; you should be able to find one that fits your particular hot tub and installation, including some that come as an all-in-one cover and lifter combination.

STEPS

For an above-ground hot tub, consider steps for safe entry and exit of your tub. Before you make a purchase, pay attention to weight and safety ratings.

HANDRAILS

Along with steps, handrails can ensure your safety when entering your hot tub, especially when the ground gets wet.

MOBILE APPLICATIONS

More and more hot tubs now offer a control app for your mobile device or computer. If you want to turn up the temperature on your hot tub before you head outside, you can simply adjust it from your phone. Or if you've gone on vacation and realize you failed to put your hot tub in economy mode, simply adjust it from the tarmac.

PRIVACY/WEATHER SHIELDS

Install your hot tub in almost any location and keep prying eyes out by installing an umbrella or gazebo.



Photo: Coast Spas

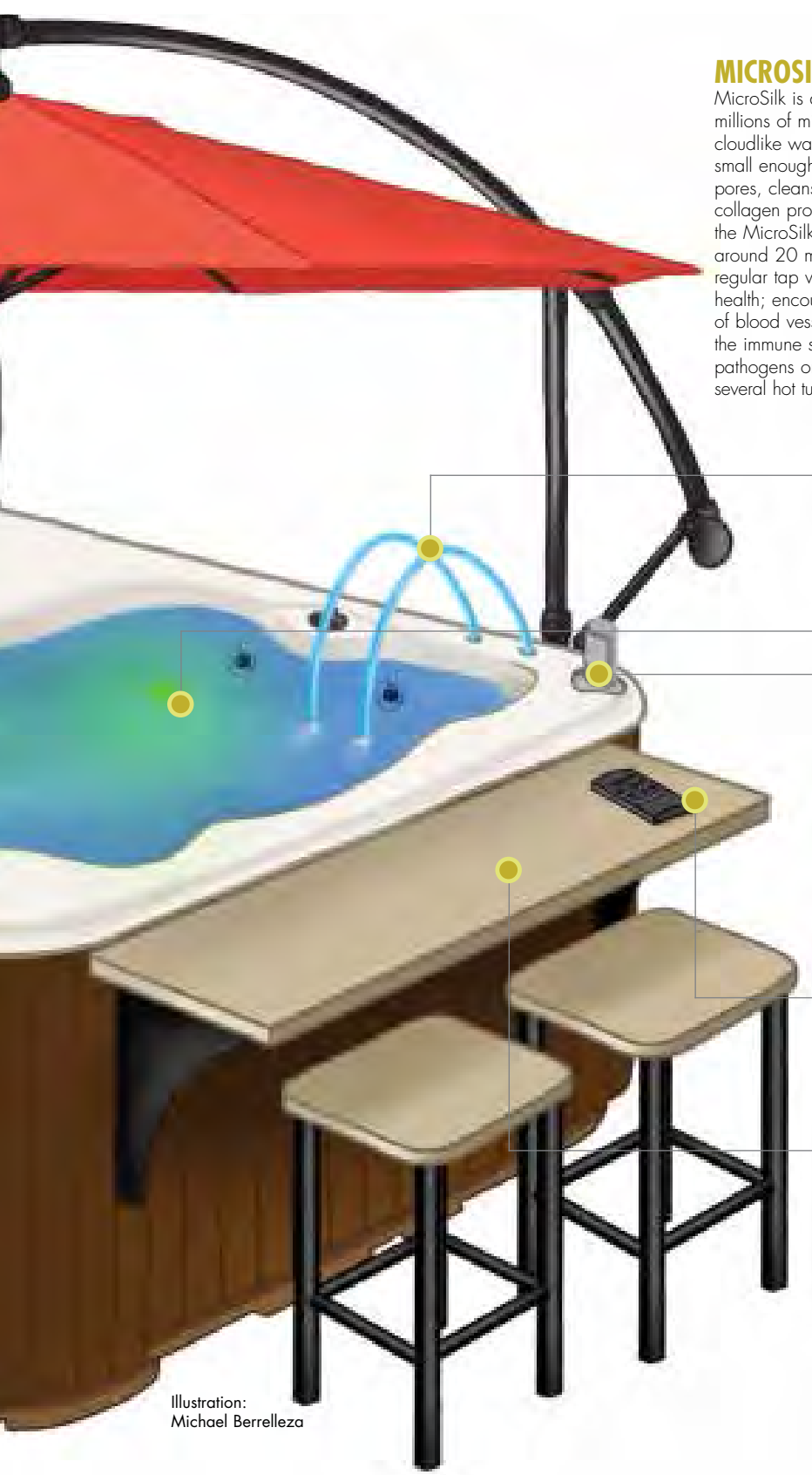


Illustration:
Michael Berrelleza

MICROSILK

MicroSilk is a system that infuses millions of microbubbles, which creates cloudlike water. These bubbles are small enough to get inside the bathers' pores, cleansing them and improving collagen production. For maximum benefit, the MicroSilk system should be used daily for around 20 minutes. Up to 70 percent more oxygenated than regular tap water, MicroSilk enhances skin cells' metabolic health; encourages skin-cell growth; improves the functioning of blood vessels; encourages the release of toxins; stimulates the immune system to fight free radicals; and kills anaerobic pathogens on contact. First introduced for use in bathtubs, several hot tub manufacturers now offer MicroSilk in their hot tubs.

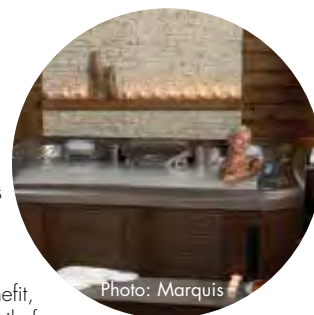


Photo: Marquis

WATER FEATURES

Waterfalls and laminar jets are just a few upgrades you can add to your hot tub that will make the soaking experience even more luxurious.

LIGHTING

Interior and exterior lighting can be added to your spa for safety and for an enticing visual experience. Look for hot tubs that have LED or fiber-optic lighting. These will not only look great, but will also reduce your operating costs.

AUDIO/VISUAL

Weatherproof televisions and music players can be purchased as part of your hot tub. Many hot tubs now have the ability to stream music from a mobile device, or have a dock for a player to attach directly to the tub.

REMOTE

A waterproof remote allows you to control the functions of your spa without having to move away from those relaxing jets.

SURROUNDS

There are many exterior customization options for your hot tub that can give it a built-in look, such as bar tops, entry steps surrounding the tub and modular storage systems. These can often be purchased in colors and materials that match the skirting of your hot tub.



Clean Sweep

Routine upkeep will
keep your pool
beautiful and tidy

Adhering to a maintenance schedule and caring for your pool equipment will save you time and money over the life of your swimming pool.

REGULAR MAINTENANCE

Preventing problems with your pool equipment can be as simple as keeping your pool clean. As needed, use a skimmer to remove dirt and debris floating in your pool, and empty your strainer basket at least once a week to prevent clogging. You should also check the strainer basket of your pump every three to six weeks; many pumps have clear plastic covering the strainer basket so you can see if debris is filling it up.

If leaves or debris too large for your automatic cleaner settle on the bottom of your pool, use a pool vacuum to suck it out. This is a good time to brush the sides of your pool to remove any dirt that's stuck, which should be done once a week.

Your filter also requires routine maintenance (read more about filters on page 52). Backwash sand and D.E. filters regularly. Not backwashing your filter will cause it to work less efficiently — you may not get enough water flow for your cleaner to move or your in-floor cleaner heads may not pop up all the way.

You should backwash your filter every two to four weeks during the swim season and every three to five weeks during the offseason. If the PSI reaches 10 above its starting point on your filter, it's time to backwash even if you've done it recently. Always check with the manufacturer of your filter or your builder to see how often they recommend a backwash.

"The maintenance [on a sand filter] is more of an as-needed basis," says certified service professional Steve Ravizza, proprietor of Arizona-based Lake Tahoe Pools. "Sand filters filter better when they have a little dirt in them. All filters have a pressure gauge, and as pressure increases that means the filter is getting dirty. When it increases past a certain point, it's time to backwash and clean it and pick your flow back up."

Every pool's base PSI will be different. You can determine what it is by cleaning all of the debris out of the pool, making sure all skimmer baskets are empty and backwashing the filter. When you turn the pump on, the reading on the pressure gauge will be your baseline PSI.

Eventually you will need to replace the sand in your sand filter, typically every three to five years. A professional should break down and clean your D.E. filter about once a year. Some states require a separation tank to catch the backwash water coming from a D.E. filter, but if you backwash it onto the ground, be careful not to let you or your pets breathe in the powder.

If you have a cartridge filter on your pool, you won't need to backwash. However, you must take the filters out and clean them every three to six months, depending on the size of your pool and filtering system. Cleaning the filters usually involves hosing off any dirt and debris. Soak the filter in a cleaning solution recommended by your manufacturer. Again, check with your builder and filter manufacturer to find out the best cleaning schedule, cleaning method and cleansing solution for your particular model.

"All cartridge filters come apart a little bit differently," Ravizza says. "The common way is shutting down the system via the main pump, opening up the air release valve on top of the filter on the pressure gauge and then disassembling the filter and removing the cartridges and hosing them off individually. And reversing the process to get yourself back up and running."

Most manufacturers and builders recommend having two filters that you can rotate — one filtering the pool while cleansing the other. This increases the life of the filters and you'll always have a clean filter on hand. How long a filter will last depends on how you maintain it, how often and how many people use your pool and how much dirt it has to filter on a regular basis. Replace your filter when the time between cleanings becomes shorter; the flow rate becomes low and the differential pressure is high; or if the filter tears or rips.

OPENING/CLOSING

You will need to do several things to prepare your pool for the cold months.

"In areas where you have a hard freeze, you drain the water below all the pipe openings so all the underground pipes can drain," Ravizza says. Some equipment will need plugging. Add algaecides to the remaining water and then cover the pool.

Different areas will have specific needs for a proper pool closing, so be sure to ask a local builder or maintenance professional.

To open your pool for the summer, reverse all processes done for closing. Have your filter serviced, refill the pool with water and have it treated to return it to usable condition.

MAINTAINING THE WATER

"I would say the most common problem that homeowners have is water chemistry," Ravizza says.

Water care doesn't have to be complicated, but you do need to be diligent, Ravizza says.

"It's no different from a guy who wants to tune up the engine on a car to save money from taking it to the shop. You've got to know all the little stuff, the fine-tuning," he says. "It's not just putting tablets in it and going about your day. I do repairs for people who we don't do service for, and the pools are quite old but in really good shape and are taken care of solely by the owner."

Not maintaining your water can lead to extra maintenance on heaters, filters and the interior surface of the pool.

"The water may be clear, it's healthy to swim in, but you end up resurfacing your pool or really taking the value out of the pool by not watching the water chemistry," Ravizza says. "I can get plaster to last 10 to sometimes as many as 15 years and not look bad. Someone who's [resurfacing their pool] at five years saves a lot of money on service [by doing it themselves], but that money would've saved their plaster and returned a lot more repair money."

HIRING A PRO

"Water maintenance isn't hard, provided you actually do it," says Matt Rozeski, owner of Penguin Pools in Wisconsin. "For us to come out and clean and maintain your pool is only \$65 a week. People pay that for lawn service, why not for your pool?"

There are many reputable companies that offer weekly water chemistry and pool maintenance

services. Ravizza encourages people who want to hire a professional to do their homework.

"Make sure that they're licensed for the work they do and their reputation is clean," Ravizza says. "Interview two or three and judge their level of knowledge. There are plenty of nice people who really don't know the business very well."

Be sure you are comfortable with how they communicate with you. Most good companies will leave service slips to indicate they've stopped by. While it's smart to shop around, keep in mind the lowest-priced company will not always save you money in the long run. ●



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TRADECERTIFIED™

To find a reputable company to do your pool service check out the list of TradeCertified™ service professionals on page 60.

FAMILY ROOM: A PLACE FOR GATHERING

Life can get pretty hectic. So many competing obligations sometimes get in the way of quality family time. A Caldera spa is a wonderful gathering place where everyone renews and reconnects. Isn't it time you opened the door for more relaxed communication? Have fun and make memories together.



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Photo: Coverstar

The Inner Workings

The products that make your pool work also make your life easier

Once you've chosen the right type of pool for you, it's time to customize. The technological advances in pumps, filters, cleaners and covers make choosing these parts of your pool an exciting adventure.



Photo: Coverstar

Got You Covered

A cover is the most essential safety and energy-saving product you can add to your pool.

A pool without a cover is like a house without a roof. That is an apt metaphor for a product that brings many essential benefits in a single package, combining safety with energy savings, decreased maintenance and longer plaster or liner life.

Pool covers fall into three general categories: solar covers, winter covers and safety covers. Solar covers are commonly sold in pool stores, characterized by their blue color with bubbles on the underside. Intended to extend the swimming season, these covers trap solar energy, preventing evaporative heat loss. They also assist in maintaining heat in pools that use external heating from pool heaters or solar collectors. They are inexpensive and expendable after a few years of service. Cut to fit with a knife or scissors, owners should never consider them a safety feature because they generally float on the pool surface rather than forming an entry barrier. As a heat-saver, however, they are very cost effective.

Winter covers are custom manufactured solid vinyl and mesh polyester devices that attach to anchors around the pool with latches or with special weights. These covers come in a wide variety of quality and provide freeze protection for winterized pools. They also keep debris out of the water. Like solar covers, owners should never consider winter covers a safety feature.

Safety covers provide the attributes of solar and winter covers with one important difference: they protect children, guests and pets from unauthorized or accidental entry to the pool. They operate by using a track on the deck or tile line of the pool that allows the rolled fabric to

draw fully across the entire surface of the pool or tensioned latches to prevent entry, essentially sealing it off from the outside. These covers can be pulled manually or operated by a switch-controlled motor. A key-controlled switch is also available to operate several types of safety covers.

Safety covers should always meet or exceed ASTM (American Society for Testing and Materials) specifications for strength, intended to reduce the risk of drowning by inhibiting the access of children under 5 to the water.

“With automation systems now you can be alerted if the cover is opened at any time,” says Ted Baudendistel, Trilogy Pools general manager. “You can get an alert on your phone, you can get a text message or an email that lets you know something needs attention.”

Costs for covers vary from around \$100 for the smallest solar blankets to several thousand dollars for the largest motorized safety covers. All covers will provide energy savings. Most companies agree the use of a safety cover can achieve a 70 percent heat savings, a 60 to 70 percent chemical savings and a 90 percent savings in evaporative water loss. These returns can be substantial, perhaps even paying for the cover in reduced costs.

“If the budget allows, install an automatic cover that will further reduce the evaporation of water, loss of chemicals, energy to heat the water and save time,” says Gary McClure, owner of McClure Pools in Fairview Heights, Ill. “The auto cover will pay for itself within three to five years depending on which region of the country you live.”

Reduced maintenance can also mean increased longevity for the pool itself. “While the automatic cover does require some maintenance, it will dramatically reduce the amount of maintenance on the pool,” says Kevin Losee, cover-products director at Latham Pool Products, Inc. “When closed, a Coverstar automatic pool cover will keep the dirt, leaves, bugs etc. out of the pool allowing the pool owner more time to enjoy the pool and less time maintaining it.”

Solar and winter covers can be added to a pool at any time. For winter covers it is best to do some shopping before making the purchase. Using a reliable pool store is a good start because they will have product knowledge suitable for the local weather conditions. Mild winter areas, for example, may require a less elaborate cover than places with long, cold weather and heavy snow accumulation. Anchors in the deck with mechanical latches are preferable to weights or bungee cord restraints.

It is best to have safety covers installed along with the construction of the pool, although they can be installed after a pool is built. Licensed and bonded pool contractors are knowledgeable in the installation and maintenance of retractable covers. These covers will often be installed to comply with local barrier code requirements, so you will have the assurance of an independent inspection of the product by the building department inspector. ●

Ask the Experts: Covers

What are the advantages of having a pool cover? Why should a consumer purchase one?

LeeAnn Donaton-Pesta, Loop-Loc

Safety, safety, safety — that is the main advantage and reason why consumers purchase a cover. Safety pool covers provide a high level of security around a pool area. They also maintain a beautiful, clean look all winter long by laying tight across the pool, allowing leaves and debris to blow off the cover.

Wes Mathis, Pool Cover Specialists

First, automatic pool covers provide effective barrier protection to help prevent unauthorized access to a swimming pool. Second, an automatic cover can help ensure an environmentally friendly pool by keeping heat in the pool, lowering costs. Third, owners may have the additional benefit of a clean pool, while using at least 70 percent less chlorine than uncovered pools. Last, an automatic cover provides the least amount of [visual] distraction to the pool environment.

John St. Clair, Coverstar

Whether it's a lake, a pool or a pond, kids are attracted to water. With safety, first and foremost, parental supervision is key, but then you need to layer on protections or backup plans, and a cover is a great backup plan. Another key element is savings. It's like sealing the pool with a Tupperware container. There's no evaporation, plus the cold rainwater, dirt and debris do not penetrate the cover. That's where the energy savings come from, and with energy costs being so high, you can see tremendous savings.

What should a consumer consider/look for when shopping for a cover?

Rick Clark, Cover-Pools Inc.

A pool owner should look for a cover that is convenient to use and certified to meet ASTM standards for safety covers. Look for a quality manufacturer with technological experience and time-tested warranties. Find a local installer or representative who is factory-trained and reputable.

LeeAnn Donaton-Pesta, Loop-Loc

It is important that a homeowner does some research. Speak with your local swimming pool professional and review online materials. Make sure the cover meets ASTM requirements and is UL approved. Before buying, a homeowner should know how the cover works and its life expectancy. Investigate the manufacturer; find out how long the company has been in business, if the company will stand behind its product and if it offers technical support. It is also important that a homeowner use a local dealer who has experience in measuring and installing safety covers.

John St. Clair, Coverstar

The reputation of cover manufacturers is very important. Are they introducing new products and are they on the cutting edge of new technology? Warranty is important, but look at what kind of warranty the manufacturer is willing to give. Are the fabric, rope and motor covered under the warranty? These are key elements that could potentially lead to service calls down the road. Are there local installation and service centers available to you? Finally, what information does the company have available to you online? For instance, tutorials on how to care for your cover, a parts catalog, etc., allowing you to search for the information yourself.

How does one maintain a pool cover?

Rick Clark, Cover-Pools Inc.

The cover fabric and mechanism should be periodically hosed off throughout the year. We also recommend an annual spring tune-up to lubricate the mechanism.

Richard Rayner, Rayner Covering Systems

For a safety cover, it's pretty easily maintained. During the winter months when the cover is on the pool constantly, there is nothing to be done. But when you take the cover off in the spring, the best thing to do is wash it down with a hose to get the chlorine off of the threads and material. Just doing that simple task will lengthen the life of a cover by four to five years.

What options do customers have for nonstandard/custom-shaped pools?

Richard Rayner, Rayner Covering Systems

We can custom-make a cover to any size, go around any obstacle. Whether it's a fountain, waterfalls, poles or handrails that don't remove, we can make a cover that would go around those without any difficulty. You can choose from five types of coloring to match the deck and stone walkways without an additional charge. Our solid covers have pumps or drain panels that you can put in to get the rainwater off the top of the cover.

Wes Mathis, Pool Cover Specialists

There are several track options for freeform pools, all designed to minimize the aesthetic distraction of the pool environment. Many pool owners have the false impression that automatic covers only work on rectangular pools. Auto covers can actually be installed on pools of just about every size and configuration and, thanks to numerous track options, automatic covers can be installed on freeform pools without detracting from the elegance of the pool environment.

John St. Clair, Coverstar

You can cover any pool if you can form two parallel lines, because we are utilizing a rectangular cover for an irregularly shaped pool. It's definitely easier to consider a cover during the construction process than after the fact because planters, slides, diving boards and ladders could potentially be in the way. But, during new construction, shape doesn't have to dictate the ability to have a cover.

What is unique about your brand of pool covers?

LeeAnn Donaton-Pesta, Loop-Loc

The key, as Bill Donaton, founder of Loop-Loc, envisioned, was to create a new type of pool cover that would allow water to drain through, rather than collect on top of the cover, since standing water on a pool cover can create a potentially dangerous drowning situation. We are proud of Loop-Loc's commitment to safety around swimming pool areas.

Rick Clark, Cover-Pools Inc.

Our durable, premium vinyl fabric is one of the most time-tested formulas in the industry and is exclusive to Cover-Pools. We also offer a comprehensive array of controls that allow automatic pool covers to work in conjunction with features, such as waterfalls and fiber-optic lighting.

Richard Rayner, Rayner Covering Systems

Our covers are the standard established as a safety cover in the original ASTM specifications. We strap the top and the bottom of the cover, both the length and the width. There are covers that strap just the bottom and not the top. Our method gives it additional strength and additional life.

Wes Mathis, Pool Cover Specialists

Pool Cover Specialists is responsible for developing numerous innovations now considered standard to the industry. Aside from that, our reputation has been built around a commitment to provide not only the best products, but also the best service.

John St. Clair, Coverstar

Coverstar does several unique things. One of them is our patented, heat-sealed webbing that runs along the side of the cover and the tracks. This webbing doesn't deteriorate or break down like some nylon webbings. Our ropes have a two-year, no-break warranty. We have two factories in the U.S., in Indiana and Utah, so our shipping times are greatly reduced. We are a company on the cutting edge for introducing new and innovative products on the marketplace.



This vinyl-lined pool built by True Blue Swimming Pools of Dix Hills, N.Y., won a silver medal in the Association of Pool & Spa Professionals' Awards of Excellence.

Pool Pumps

The workhorse of your pool has undergone a major revolution.

Let's talk physics, shall we? The affinity laws tell us a whole bunch about motors, pumps and fans. If you didn't adore science class, you likely found them in textbooks flanked by daunting terminology like "nominal speed," "shaft power" and "volumetric flow rate." But even with poor marks in high school physics, if you're shopping for a swimming pool pump, you should know that affinity laws can save you money.

"Tremendous, tremendous energy savings," says Zack Pickard, Pentair Pumps product manager, "on the order of hundreds or even thousands of watts."

The technology that makes these savings possible has existed for more than 50 years, and is used in such things as elevators and conveyor belts. And recently it's available in swimming pool pumps. The idea behind the advancement is simple: When you decrease the speed of a motor,

the amount of energy the motor needs to turn declines.

"It comes down to physics," says Scott Petty, products manager of pumps and above-ground equipment for Hayward Pool.

The affinity laws call this a cubic function. So, if a motor's speed decreases by half, the motor uses one-eighth the power. Thus, a motor that can run at more than two speeds and tailor its speed to the situation allows for significant energy savings. Stick that motor in a swimming pool pump, and the pool owner can cut his energy costs by up to 90 percent.

"Sometimes the pool pump is the largest electrical load in your house," says Jeff Farlow, program manager of energy initiatives for Pentair Aquatic Systems.

The rate of payback on a variable-speed pump varies based on utility costs, but Pickard says Pentair's variable-speed models often pay for themselves within the first year.

"I'm a skeptical person in my personal life," he says. "I'd be like, 'Come on. There has to be a catch.' But the

truth of it is, there is no catch. If anything, there are side benefits that are almost as good or compelling.”

A lower velocity of water places less stress on the equipment, leading variable-speed pumps to last longer. It also means the unit makes less noise.

“Quieter is a huge unintended benefit of this,” Farlow says. “It’s hard to sell that on the front end, but once it’s installed, you’re like, ‘Oh, my gosh.’ You get some of these homes with small lots, and often the only place to put your equipment panel is under your bedroom window.”

Furthering the case for variable-speed pumps, in February 2013 Energy Star began certifying the pumps. Managed by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Energy Star is a domestic labeling program dedicated to helping individuals protect the environment through superior energy efficiency. ●

CHOOSING THE PERFECT PUMP

Your pool builder will still be the ultimate authority on pump selection. There are qualities of each type of pump that make its use appropriate for a specific application. A pump for in-floor cleaning, for example, requires high gallonage at relatively high pressure in fairly restrictive plumbing. Conversely, a waterfall pump may need high gallonage in a nonrestrictive environment, but has special needs of lifting water several feet.

Energy Efficiency

Choose a fully rated pump so it is capable of delivering maximum gallonage for each kilowatt of electrical power consumed. Team up with your builder and compare flow rates for pumps based on the restrictions of your specific pool design. This comparison will show which family of pumps is appropriate for your pool design.

Quiet Operation

Obviously, the more stealthy the pump, the more desirable it is. Odd as it may seem, this feature translates into real dollar savings when the pump can run at night without disturbing you or your neighbors. Since most parts of the country enjoy lower electric rates at night, you’re likely to see reduced electric bills this way.

Clear Lid

Using a clear lid allows you to see debris in the pump basket without removing the lid, which means you’re more likely to clean it, ensuring a more free-flowing pump.

Air Cooling Fan

Heat is not good for motors. A cooling fan helps the motor last longer.

Large Pump Basket

The bigger the basket, the more debris it can trap before starving the pump for water. As a side benefit, the pump will be easier to prime because the contained water capacity surrounding the basket is greater.

Tall Base

In areas with lots of rain or in yards with standing water, it is desirable to have the pump, and especially the motor, as high off the ground as possible.

ENERGY STAR RATINGS

As with many advanced, more efficient products, Energy Star certified pool pumps cost more to purchase. However, that incremental cost is easily recovered in energy savings in less than two years. Energy Star has created a savings calculator to make it easy for home owners to see the benefits of an Energy Star certified pool pump. The calculator is available at ENERGYSTAR.GOV/POOLPUMPS.

TOP PRODUCTS | ENERGY STAR PUMPS



Hayward Industries, Inc.

haywardindustries.com

The variable-speed Super Pump claims up to 80 percent energy savings over traditional single-speed pumps. The Super Pump can be used in new construction and as a replacement on existing pools. Not only is the pump Energy Star rated, but the programmable timers and enclosed permanent magnet motor also meet efficiency standards for Title 20 and APSP 15.



Pentair Aquatic Systems

pentairpool.com

According to Pentair, the IntelliFlo VS+SVRS pumps can reduce energy costs up to 90 percent over traditional pumps. The pump employs digital intelligence with variable-speed technology and permanent magnet motors to increase efficiency. The programmable pump also has built-in diagnostics to protect it from common problems.



Waterway Plastics

waterwayplastics.com

The Econo-Flo VSA pump from Waterway Plastics is Energy Star rated and meets Title 20 and Title 24 regulations. The user-friendly programming allows for installation and programming of additional loads, such as a booster pump or chlorine generator. It comes with an adjustable base so that it adapts to existing pool setups. The pumps pressure is testable up to 50 psi and has built-in freeze protection.



Zodiac Pool Systems

zodiacpoolsystems.com

Zodiac’s Jandy-branded ePump + SVRS pool pump has eight variable speeds. It features Jandy’s Pro Series’ Quiet Technology for smooth, quiet function. The ePump comes with many user-friendly features like a large trap basket, easy-to-read indicators and ergonomic handles. The pump is completely programmable and meets Title 20 and APSP 15 standards.



Cleaners

Maximize your me time: install a pool cleaner.

The prevailing wisdom is that a pool should take no longer to tend than the same area of landscaping. If you spend 20 minutes caring for a 20-square-foot plot in your backyard, you should spend 20 minutes caring for 20 square feet of your pool.

Years ago, they would laugh you out of the pool-supply store with that statement. During that time, homeowners cleaned pools by sweeping dirt and debris

into the main drain with a brush. This included labor-intensive sweeping of the walls, floor, steps, benches, lights and fittings. This process proved fairly effective at keeping the pool clean, but it was only as good as the skill and “elbow grease” of the person sweeping, and the frequency of the process.

Early attempts at providing automatic pool cleaning involved the use of flexible tubing with a nozzle and weights, known as wearings, which used pressurized filtered water to stir up suspended dirt; the idea was to push debris in the direction of the main drains. Known as a ‘whip’ or ‘snake,’ this tubing had an undulating and sweeping motion.

The tubing sometimes served as a source of amusement because it was prone to periodically swinging out of the water and squirting an unsuspecting guest. They also had the irritating habit of spraying nearby windows and were known to occasionally leap out of the pool and flood the yard. The first category of modern automatic pool cleaners was born from these humble beginnings.

Today, most swimming pools incorporate one of four technologically advanced cleaning systems, pressure, suction, in-floor and robotic devices that provide consistent and maintenance-free care for your pool. As a group, pool cleaners provide a vital function, enabling you to enjoy your pool and keep caring for it as simple as possible.

Pressure Cleaners

Since filtered water returns to the pool, manufacturers reasoned that this water would be useful for driving devices that would sweep the pool and vacuum leaves and debris. Some of these cleaners use separate booster pumps to add additional power to the cleaning effectiveness; they pull debris into containment areas while using tailing whips to stir up dirt. Since these cleaners operate while the

pump is running, the pool receives constant cleaning unless the homeowner removes them while the pool is in use.

Suction Cleaners

Since circulation systems draw water from the pool, some cleaners use this suction as their primary force, the thought being similar to a constantly moving main drain. As such, these cleaners travel around the pool sucking up dirt and debris. As a group, they are the least expensive type of cleaner because they do not require extra pumps. They also retrofit well by using the existing skimmer as a point of installation, but they work better with a dedicated suction line. They deposit debris directly in the pump basket.

In-Floor Cleaners

Most in-floor systems use floor-mounted cleaning heads or nozzles to inject a large volume of high pressure filtered water across the pool floor. The turbulence from this water stirs up dirt and debris so the circulation system can remove it. The intention of these systems is installation on new pools because of the extensive plumbing that runs from an actuator valve, located at or near the pool equipment, to each cleaning head. Water directed to a particular set of cleaning nozzles causes the cleaning heads to ratchet 30 degrees in order to direct water to a different place in the pool. Every 12 round-trips, a sweep of the entire pool is accomplished.

Robotic Cleaners

Robotic cleaners became popular over the years because they operate independently of the pool pump and filter. You simply take the cleaner out of the box, plug it in and most are ready to go. The cleaners either have pre-programming for the size and shape of your pool, or they automatically sense the way they should travel. Some even come with remote controls, so you can make sure all areas of the pool are clean. Robotic cleaners are incredibly energy efficient since they are powered by low-voltage electricity instead of your pool pump.

While it is a lot to consider, there are manufacturers that do an admirable job at simplifying the often mundane process of selecting pool equipment. This is mostly because a prospective pool buyer can now purchase all of his pool equipment from the same source. Consider the advantages: one-stop shopping, equipment that plays well together, and in the unlikely event your equipment requires servicing, a single source for your service needs. ●

TOP PRODUCTS POOL CLEANERS



Hayward Pool Products

PoolVac XL
hayward-pool.com

The PoolVac XL is powered by the existing circulation pump, so there's no additional expense of a booster pump. It has the AquaPilot Automatic Pre-Programmed Steering, which allows it to move in predetermined series of right and left turns to systematically provide more thorough coverage of the pool's surface area.



Pentair

Kreepy Krauly Racer
pentairpool.com

The Kreepy Krauly Racer cleaner cleans 30 percent faster than any other pressure-side cleaner. It uses one-third more cleaning power, a massive intake and a builtin rotating brush to tackle dirt and debris with ease. The Night Cruise LED Lights add intrigue after dark. Just attach the Racer to your dedicated pressure line and watch it go to work.



Paramount

PCC 2000
1paramount.com

The PCC 2000 is a self-cleaning system built right into a pool's floor. Builders install pop-up jets on the pool's floor, steps and benches which rotate to help dirt flow to a debris collection zone, also installed in pool's floor. It has the added benefit of improving water circulation, which helps save heat energy and lowers chemical usage.



Polaris

9550 Sport
polarispool.com

The 4WD 9550 Sport robotic pool cleaner features has a seven-day programmable timer, with fully customizable cleaning cycles that allows you to set it and forget it. A dirty canister indicator lets you know when it's time to empty the filter canister and the Easy Lift System brings the cleaner to the surface of the pool for you to easily remove it.

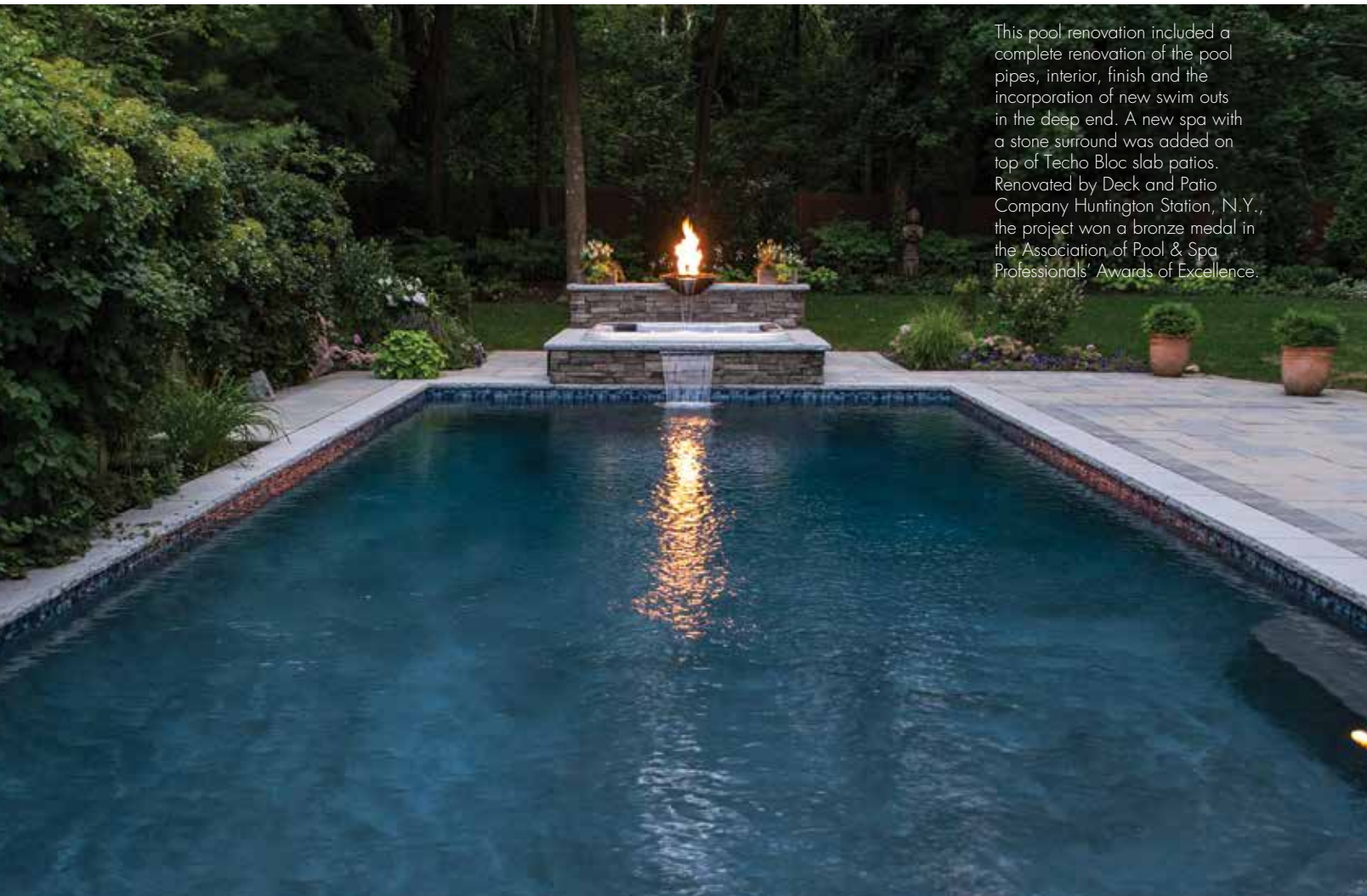


What square hot tubs
want to be when they
grow up.



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This pool renovation included a complete renovation of the pool pipes, interior, finish and the incorporation of new swim outs in the deep end. A new spa with a stone surround was added on top of Techo Bloc slab patios. Renovated by Deck and Patio Company Huntington Station, N.Y., the project won a bronze medal in the Association of Pool & Spa Professionals' Awards of Excellence.

Filters & Heaters

Geography matters when choosing the most efficient way to keep water clean and warm.

Filters

Pool filters remove dirt from pool water. They do not remove algae, algae spores, bacteria, viruses or minerals. They constitute the part of the pool equipment that involves the attention of pool owners more often than any other. The choice of filter becomes one that really should be made by the owner.

Filters come in three types: sand, diatomaceous earth (D.E.) and cartridge (modular media).

Sand Filter

These filters are suitable for households where minimal maintenance is a major factor. When sand filters become dirty, they become more restrictive to water flow, so the pressure gauge on the filter shows higher than normal

pressure. The pool owner simply reverses the water flow through the filter in a process called backwashing, and dirty water is pumped into the yard through a waste hose. When the water runs clear, the filter is put back into a normal running mode again.

Sand filters, while providing the easiest maintenance, perform filtration to approximately 60 microns, allowing some particulates other filters remove to pass by freely.

Diatomaceous Earth Filter

D.E. filters offer filtration down to five microns, meaning exceptional cleaning power. These filters offer the side-benefit of being very free-flowing, meaning the pump does not have to work hard at getting water through the filter. They are backwashed just like a sand filter, but less frequently.

When backwash water is discharged, a milky powder residue flows from the hose. This is the used D.E. powder that must be tolerated or washed into the landscape. Replace the scent powder in the filter by adding it to the skimmer. Additionally, the filter must be disassembled on

a routine basis for manual cleaning.

D.E. filters provide the best water quality of all the filters, but you must use precautions when handling the powder as it has been found to be carcinogenic. In fact, some municipalities now require that the backwash residue be disposed of, not left in the environment.

Cartridge Filters

Technical advances in the past few years make cartridge filters a very attractive choice for many pool owners. Using long-lasting elements, these filters require no backwashing. Filtration is in the 20-micron range and resistance to water flow is almost as good as a D.E. filter.

When cartridge filters require cleaning, the pressure gauge reads higher than normal. Shut off the pump, secure the circuit breaker, then remove the filter top and extract the filter. Unless otherwise instructed by your pool builder or the filter manufacturer, hose off the filter to remove dirt and soak it in detergent to remove oily deposits. Once it is thoroughly rinsed, the filter is reassembled.

Depending on pool and filter size and the amount of airborne dirt in the area, these filters may be able to run all year without cleaning. Since cartridge filters don't require routine attention, they become an attractive choice for households where annual maintenance becomes a ritual marking the beginning or end of the swimming season.

Heaters

Pool heating involves four main types of devices that have advantages for some applications, but not for others.

These types of heaters are: natural gas, propane gas (L.P.), heat pumps and solar.

Natural Gas

With relatively low-cost installation and operation, natural-gas heaters offer rapid heating times if the pool use is occasional or when the swimming season needs to be extended

by a few weeks in spring and fall. They can also be used to maintain heat throughout the year. Since natural gas heaters no longer use standing pilot lights, they are safe for residential applications and better for the environment.

Propane Gas

The use of a propane-gas heater is exactly the same as a natural gas heater in areas where natural gas is not available. With propane it is critical to ensure the propane tank corresponds to the size of the heater. Using a too-small tank can lead to icing, which will prevent the heater from operating properly, if at all.

Heat Pumps

A viable means for maintaining heat, heat pumps work well in areas that enjoy warm days and moderate nights. They do not heat water rapidly, but are effective in returning lost heat to the pool. Their big advantage is the use of free energy to do the heating, expressly heat contained in the air. The heat pump draws air in and across a collector that transfers it to pool water. Obviously, the warmer the air the more heat it contains, and the more efficiently the unit runs, so it will perform better in October than January.

Solar

Upon installation of a solar heating system, a pool owner receives virtually free energy. The only expense is the cost to run a small recirculation pump. The system draws water from the pool, runs it through a series of solar collectors and returns it, heated, to the pool. This type of system works well for families who want to extend their swim season to include all warm and sunny days. Most homeowners in the Sun Belt can use a pool equipped with a properly engineered solar system in November and March. Some years, they may even work in December and February. ●

TYPES OF FILTERS

The type of filter on your pool will determine how often and what kind of maintenance it will need. These offerings from Hayward are great examples of what is on the market. Check HAYWARD-POOL.COM to see all its latest models.



VL Series

A pump/sand filter combo made for above-ground pools.



SwimClear and Pro-Grid

The SwimClear cartridge filter requires no backwashing. The Pro-Grid D.E. filter is designed for easy servicing.



ProSeries

The Pro-Series sand filter can work with any type of pool layout and cleaning systems.



Saltwater

A popular option for water care, be sure you understand how to properly care for a salt chlorinator.

The first time you heard the words “saltwater pool,” it’s possible you imagined a mini-ocean in your backyard; in fact, the salt content in a saltwater pool is far lower than even that of a human teardrop.

Just like the ocean, saltwater pool water feels very different on your skin and eyes. While a standard chlorine pool without proper chemical balance can cause dry skin and red eyes, a saltwater pool makes skin feel soft and refreshed. The odor and irritation some people experience in common pools is not from chlorine, but from the chloramines that result from additives in manufactured chlorine reacting to sweat, oil and other solutions. A saltwater chlorinator produces 100 percent pure chlorine, so these byproducts do not exist.

The benefits don’t stop there. Saltwater chlorinators, also called chlorine generators, are easy to install, environmentally friendly and simple to operate. Most units are plumbed right into the filter of your existing system. The system delivers a consistent level of chlorine directly to the pool, so the need to purchase and transport pool chemicals is eliminated. Since the system continuously reuses the salt and generates chlorine naturally, there are no chemicals to flush and virtually no impact on the environment.

According to industry statistics, just five years ago fewer than 250,000 saltwater pools existed in the United States. Today, there are more than 1.3 million and counting. Some reports estimate 70 percent of all new pools have

a saltwater system. These systems can be used on both above-ground and in-ground pools, with above-ground pools using a smaller saltwater generator. How do these systems work? How are they maintained? And what is the driving force behind the recent boom? Why is there no salty taste? And why does the water feel so smooth and silky?

It’s all about chemistry. The ocean has a salt concentration between 31,000 and 35,000 parts per million. A human teardrop is about 7,200ppm. The ideal level for a saltwater sanitized pool is between 2,000 and 4,000ppm, with salt content equivalent to one teaspoon per gallon of water — not enough to taste or dry out your skin, but enough to kill bacteria, viruses and algae.

The way it works is simple. There are two main components of a saltwater chlorinator: the electrolytic power cell and the power generator. With the majority of systems, salt is added to the pool water in the form of crystals — similar to water softener or table salt. Once the salty water passes through the electrolytic cell, a small charge from the power generator separates the salt (sodium chloride) into pure chlorine gas, hydrogen and a small dose of ozone. The chlorine gas dissolves into the water, sanitizing the pool. When the chlorine finishes its job, it reverts into salt and the process begins again.

Because it recycles, very little replenishing of the salt is necessary after the initial dose. Usually, only splashing, water evaporation and rainwater dilution result in lost salt content, incurring a replacement cost of \$10 to \$20 per year.

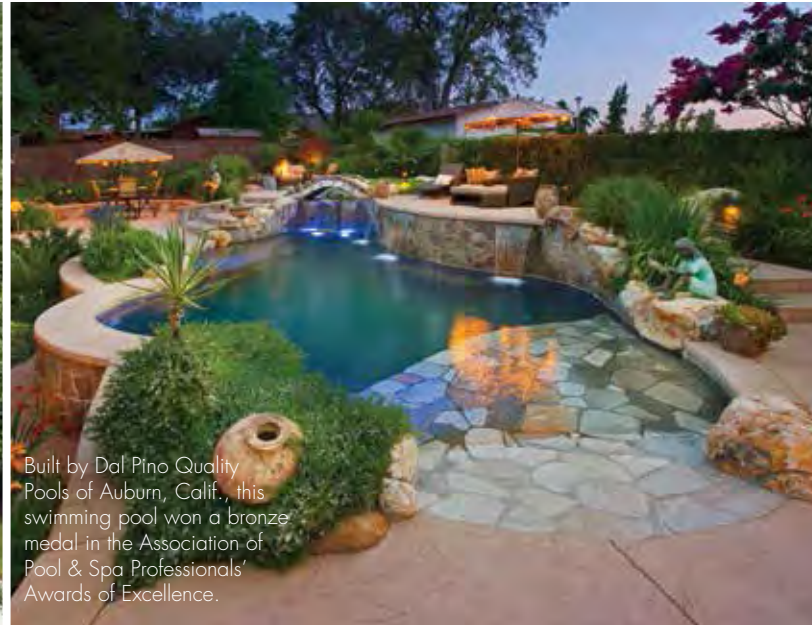
Chlorine generators lessen the amount of daily maintenance and testing needed, but do not eliminate maintenance altogether. Owners should still monitor the chlorine, pH, alkalinity and stabilizer regularly, as these levels still have an impact on the effectiveness of the system. In addition, owners should test the salt content at least twice per year.

As with any pool, bather load and/or heavy rain could require shocking the water, known as ‘superchlorinating’ in a saltwater system. Most units have a superchlorination button right on the control panel. Other models will automatically superchlorinate when the system senses the balance is off.

The cost of water maintenance on a saltwater pool is significantly less than other methods because of the recycled chlorine. Pool owners will usually break even on maintenance costs in as little as two years. But while the cost to maintain the water is lower, saltwater is corrosive and can sometimes cause problems with the other pool equipment. Maintaining proper water balance and regularly cleaning your pool equipment, should help lessen this risk. ●



Built by Caribbean Blue Pools & Spas of Pompton Plains, N.J., the slide goes from the first to second level of the pool. This design won a gold medal in the Association of Pool & Spa Professionals' Awards of Excellence.



Built by Dal Pino Quality Pools of Auburn, Calif., this swimming pool won a bronze medal in the Association of Pool & Spa Professionals' Awards of Excellence.

Don't Forget, This is Fun!

You want a pool that is built correctly, but be sure to think about features that are purely for your pleasure.

You want to get the most enjoyment possible out of your new pool, so think about how it will fit into your lifestyle.

AROUND THE POOL

You may not picture yourself swimming in your pool, well, much at all. Mike Giovanone, owner of Concord Pools in Latham, N.Y., says the owner of one of the most high-end installations his company has ever done doesn't use the pool very often.

"He said, 'You know, I haven't been in the pool for probably a year, but I spend at least two hours a day, my quiet time while I'm doing my thinking, outside next to the pool,' " Giovanone says.

If your swimming pool will serve as a place to relax and entertain next to, not necessarily in, consider water and fire features that will enhance your backyard landscape. You may even want to think about showpiece pool designs such as a vanishing edge, deck-level overflows or elevated perimeter overflows.

Most pool builders offer much more than pool design. They can often help you design and build your entire backyard. In addition, things like outdoor kitchens, fire pits and decks can help create the perfect outdoor living space.

"What's around the pool is just as important as what's in the pool," Giovanone says. "We don't want this yard

to be used only on 90-degree sunny days; we want it to be used to sit around the fire pit, around the BBQ, around the outside kitchens or the swimming pool. We want it to be a complete environment for family fun, entertaining and peace of mind."

IN THE POOL

Chris Cipriano, president of Cipriano Landscape Design and Custom Swimming Pools in Mahwah, N.J., says it's important for a swimming pool to be both fun and functional. One of the most popular options his clients choose is a sun shelf, which is a very shallow raised section or entry point to the pool.

"It's great because the mother can be in the water with a young child," Cipriano says. "Once the children become teenagers, they put the lounge chairs and the beach chairs in that area. Adults tend to sit on a chaise lounge reading a book with their feet in the water, watching the rest of the family enjoy other aspects of the pool."

Another sought-after feature are water slides. But these days, slides don't have to be the eyesore bolted onto the pool deck that they were in years past. Slides can be integrated into the surrounding landscape or covered with rock so as to enhance, not detract from, the overall look of the backyard.

"Everybody loves the slides," Cipriano says, "and what's critical is how they integrate into the pool. We want to know what the entry point into the water is, how the kids are coming out of the water, how they're getting back to the slide and how it relates to the adults. You don't want kids running through the adult area to get to the slide. You want to make it aesthetically pleasing, functional and interact with the other goals of the pool." ●

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When it's time for a tune-up, know the tech talk: A hot tub, like any major appliance, needs regular maintenance, preventative service and occasional repairs.



THE FIVE CORNERSTONES OF GOOD SERVICE

Hot tubs can differ greatly depending on make and model, and so can their after-sales service policies. Before purchasing, confirm that the dealership or manufacturer will provide the backup you may need.

Often likened to buying a car, the process of purchasing your spa should not end on the showroom floor. You will be enjoying your hot tub for years to come, and normal use will eventually require that certain mechanical parts be replaced. *Spasearch* has identified five characteristics common to exceptional service providers.

1

PERSONABLE PERSONNEL

Friendly and professional interactions are characteristic of hot tub dealers and manufacturers with first-rate customer care. With a superior after-sales company, you will never feel a salesperson is annoyed to hear from you. Each interaction will build upon your last until you have developed a solid, professional connection based on mutual esteem. You should experience a positive reception when you call the showroom, interact with service staff or communicate with anyone at the company. When a policy of excellent service is evident at every level, you know you've made the right choice.

2

CHECK-IN CHATS

Staff must act quickly when there's a problem, but it's equally important to feel they are ready to help even when everything is going well. Your ideal sales team will not only remember you after you walk out of the showroom, but they will also make an effort to keep in touch, calling or emailing you a couple months after the purchase to make sure everything is going well, and then catching up once a year or so. This demonstrates a commitment to service and a faith in their product that should put you at ease when you need to schedule a service visit.



3

CHAMPION COMMUNICATION

A reputable retailer will be up front with you in response to all your questions — not just about its products, but also about the company's history. You'll want to bring a list of questions so you can walk away from the dealership knowing how long it has been in business, what awards they or the manufacturer have earned, how many installations they typically oversee a year and approximately how often its spas require after-sales service.

Reputable businesses want your feedback. Sales staff who solicit your opinion about the company's service through surveys and comment cards are demonstrating a vested interest not only in getting and keeping your business, but also in maintaining a high level of performance for the company.

4

MONDAY MEANS MONDAY

Your first question after the sale is the true test of customer service. It doesn't have to be a large or overwhelming question; perhaps you've simply forgotten how to test the pH levels of your water. If you call the dealership and receive a prompt and friendly response, you know you have made the correct choice.

Companies that typically provide exceptional after-sales attention make it easy to get in touch with those capable of solving any problem. Test for this level of responsiveness even before the sale occurs by noting how well the dealer follows up on his or her prepurchase promises — whether it's being on time for appointments, having answers to your questions when you need them, or simply letting you look around the showroom in a pressure-free way.

WHAT TO DO BEFORE YOU CALL

NO POWER

1. If the top side control panel shows lights or anything on the screen, push buttons to see if you get any reaction.
2. Go to the breaker and turn it all the way off, then back on to see if it helps. A breaker that is tripping immediately might not be obvious. Feel the breaker lock into the 'on' position. If it trips immediately, call your service provider.
3. Push the "test" button on the ground fault circuit interrupter. If the GFCI is working and has power engaged, this will trip, letting you know there is probably power to the breaker.

NO HEAT

1. Are there any codes or is the heat indicator on? If it is and there are no error codes, it's calling for heat but the element is probably bad. Be sure to mention this to the service department when you call.
2. If the spa is running and wired to 220, turn pump one on high and wait a moment and see if the heat light comes on. If it does, the issue is probably a bad flow sensor or low flow, which will require a service technician to fix.
3. Turn off the power, pull the filters and then turn the power back on. Often it's nothing more than low water or dirty filters. On many brands, wait at least 60 seconds before reset.

5

NO SKELETONS

Everything you discussed prior to the sale should be stated in full on your contract, and there should be no hidden charges, unmentioned service costs or small-print loopholes. Ask friends, family or even an online forum to assess your choice. You want superior service to be the result of thorough research, not an extraordinary surprise.

The next step is not to keep your discovery a secret. There are thousands of hot tub buyers deliberating the best retailer for them. Your advice could be just the encouragement they need to make the right choice. ■



Illustration by Michael Berrelleza

Clues Your Significant Other Wants A Hot Tub

BY PAUL SEABURN

AFTER MANY YEARS OF MARRIAGE, I thought I knew my wife pretty well. Then one day, she served me a bowl of alphabet soup with all of the letters removed except H, O, T, T, U and B. That's how it started. I don't know about the fury of a woman scorned, but I can attest to the fury of a woman in quest of a hot tub. We're soaking happily now, but to spare you from going to a counselor when you could be spending that money on a spa, here are some clues your significant other wants a hot tub.

- 10 He refuses to buy anything that doesn't float.
- 9 You keep finding Barbie and Ken in the Crock-Pot.
- 8 He buys Alka Seltzer just to listen to the sound of bubbles.
- 7 She keeps trying to fit a plastic chair in the bathtub.
- 6 Every plant in the house has been re-potted in a wooden barrel.
- 5 During bridge games, he sighs every time someone uses the word "deck."
- 4 She asks the barista at Starbucks how many people a 'grande' will seat.
- 3 He begs his doctor to find something wrong with him that a hot tub can be prescribed for.
- 2 Every night he soaks his feet while watching his DVD of "Waterworld."
- 1 He refuses to consume any hot drink without checking the pH first.

About Our Humorist

Paul Seaburn is the head writer for *Taylor's Attic*, an Emmy-winning comedy on the Hife network, and has written for *The Tonight Show* and *Politically Incorrect*. You can see more of his humor at HUMOR-



Is My Local Dealer Certified?

THE MOST IMPORTANT QUESTION YOU SHOULD ASK BEFORE BUYING OR SERVICING YOUR NEXT SWIMMING POOL, HOT TUB OR SWIM SPA.

For years we have helped direct people to quality hot tub manufacturers through our certified endorsement award. Now we have expanded that independent, audited endorsement to include local builders, dealers and service professionals. But being a Certified Pool Builder means more than just being able to slap a sticker on the front door. The retailers who win this award have to adhere to a strict set of criteria, criteria that ensures that someone who buys a swimming pool from these retailers has selected the best builder in their local market.

Fair. Accurate. Independent. Local.

THEY'VE STOOD THE TEST OF TIME.

We've heard the sad tales during this economic downturn of people buying goods from retailers who had to close their doors before making good on all of their promises. Not only do Certified Pool Builders have to be in business for a certain number of years in order to be considered for the award, but also their affiliation with this endorsement as well as other required national and local trade and business groups exhibit their devotion to their customers, the hot tub industry and local community.

THEY ARE COMMITTED TO THEIR CUSTOMERS.

In order to become a Certified Pool Builder, pool builders must have a proven track record of customer satisfaction. Through written testimonials and a customer satisfaction survey, *Poolsearch* makes sure that customer happiness isn't just lip service. Certified winners must also sign and adhere to a Customer Bill of Rights which outlines how all customers should be treated before, after and during a hot tub sale.

THEY KNOW WHAT THEY'RE DOING.

Certified winners must engage in a certain number of education hours for their employees, which means that from the sales team to the service technicians, you should be in good hands. Their service department must also meet standards set forth by various industry organizations or local state licensing to qualify for the award. Beyond that, Certified Pool Builders must sell a superior product – a Poolsearch or Spasearch Certified manufacturer.

CUSTOMER BILL OF RIGHTS

Preamble

Our goal is to serve you, the consumer, in a manner that speaks to the way we all would like to be treated: with honesty, fairness, respect and openness. While we certainly do this "behind the scenes," we feel it is important to specifically and openly address these issues that show our deep-seated commitment to you. To that end, we subscribe to the Poolsearch Certified™ Pool Builder standards and Consumer Bill of Rights, a rigorous guide established to ensure your purchase, ownership and service experience meets and exceeds your expectations.

Sales

- A friendly, non-aggressive and courteous sales environment
- A considerate and knowledgeable professional consultant
- Truthful and accurate marketing materials
- The opportunity to privately wet test a product prior to purchase
- A complete explanation of all costs associated with purchase
- A full and confidential discussion of payment/financing options

Delivery

- Timely and prompt delivery and/or installation
- Thorough on-site inspection and testing of all products delivered
- A comprehensive discussion related to the maintenance and recommended service schedules

- An understandable explanation and written copies of warranties on all products sold

Facilities

- Clean, well-maintained and appealing showroom facilities
- Private, sanitary wet test facilities
- A variety of well-stocked product lines that enhance the ownership experience
- Convenient operating hours, with after-hour appointments available if necessary

Service

- Timely, scheduled and prompt service calls
- A professional technician who is easily identifiable and shows identification upon request
- A full explanation of your service/maintenance issues, including estimated time and costs to complete

- Your approval of charges prior to work being started
- A complete description of all work performed and an itemized list of applicable charges

Satisfaction

- Our pledge to always act in good faith
- Our commitment to the highest standards of ethics and integrity
- Our belief in honest and fair treatment for every customer, without discrimination
- Our passion to provide timely and accurate responses to inquiries and requests
- Our dedication to maintaining customer records with the utmost care in privacy and confidentiality

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CUSTOM design
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